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ABSTRACT

Successful students are successful learners who identify, make a commitment to, and attain their education goals. They acquire and demonstrate the skills, knowledge, attitudes, and self-direction needed to perform ethically and productively in society, to adapt to change, to appreciate diversity, and to make a reasoned commitment on issues of importance. This definition of student success requires, for its achievement, a precise awareness on the part of a college of exactly who its students are and what steps to success the college needs to provide. The college must also be willing to assess and improve those steps continually. While each college must fashion particular strategies to address the needs of its own students, general trends and ideas that characterize efforts of all effective community colleges can be identified. This position statement, prepared by the National Council of Instructional Administrators (NCIA) of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, draws upon the principles outlined in the National Institute of Higher Education report "Involvement in Learning" (1984), and Chickering and Gamson's "Faculty Inventory" (1987), as well as upon the practices of outstanding community colleges across the nation, to offer guidelines and suggestions for promoting student success. The statement focuses on strategies in the areas of admission and orientation; the classroom; the college curriculum; the faculty; and college-wide concerns. An afterward stresses NCIA's role in promoting student success. (MPH)

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PROMOTING STUDENTS SUCCESS IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

An NCIA Position Statement

I. Student Success: A Definition

Student success has always been a dominant article of faith in the community college credo. Fundamental to that belief are strong commitments to student access, student retention, and student achievement. Today's community college strives to guarantee access, to improve retention, and to assure achievement. The ultimate aim is a quality collegiate education, one in which student success is closely linked with, dependent upon, and defined in terms of effective teaching resulting in meaningful learning.

"Student success" and the "successful student" may thus be defined as follows:

Learning is at the heart of student success. Successful students are successful learners who identify, commit to, and attain their education goals. They acquire and demonstrate the skills, knowledge, attitudes and self-direction needed to perform ethically and productively in society, to adapt to change, to appreciate diversity, and to make a reasoned commitment on issues of importance.

This definition of student success requires, for its achievement, a precise awareness on the part of a college of exactly who its students are and what steps to success it needs to provide -- and a willingness continually to assess and improve those steps.

II. Students Success: Current Strategies

While each college must fashion its particular strategies to address the needs of its own students, there are general trends and ideas that characterize the student success efforts of all flagship community college. Basic to these fundamental strategies are guidelines set forth in two well-known documents: (1) the 1984 National Institute of Higher Education Report *Involvement in Learning: Realizing the Potential of American Higher Education,* and (2) the 1987 *Faculty Inventory: 7 Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education,* published by Art Chickering and Zelda Gamson under the auspices of the American Association for Higher Education, the Education Commission of the States, and the Johnson Foundation. In the former, three "universal conditions of excellence" were identified:

1. Student involvement in the learning process;

2. High expectations by the institution;

3. Regular assessment and feedback for evaluative purposes.

In the latter, the "7 Principles" were as follows:

1. Encourage student-faculty contact.

2. Encourage cooperation among students.

3. Encourage active learning.

4. Give prompt feedback.

5. Emphasize time on task.

6. Communicate high expectations.

7. Respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

The suggestions below regarding student success incorporate the principles from these two sources, additional principles from other written sources, and the practices of outstanding community colleges across the nation -- from the distinct perspective of student success as defined above.

Admission and Orientation Strategies for Student Success:

* Begin contact with students before they enter the college through outreach and articulation activities.

* Provide clear, supportive financial aid, admissions, and registration procedures.

* Provide basic skills assessment and resulting placement at appropriate levels.

* Provide a thorough college orientation program, one which includes emphases on basic study skills and learning to learn.

* Gather data each semester on each student that will permit tracking and assessment of student success.

* Provide an advisement system that is available to the student from admission to eventual graduation or transfer.

Classroom Strategies for Student Success:

* Encourage student-faculty contact.

* Encourage cooperation among students.

* Encourage active learning.

* Give prompt feedback.

* Emphasize time on task.

* Communicate high expectations.

* Respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

* Make fill use of advanced technology for both classroom teaching and classroom management.

* Relate subject matter to students' experiences and interests.

* Emphasize understanding rather than coverage of course material.

* Share with students the desired learning outcomes for the course.

* Incorporate reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking activities - regardless of subject matter.

* Demonstrate the interconnectedness of the individual course with courses in other disciplines and with general education.

* Focus on formative assessment rather than summative testing.

* Use classroom research strategies to monitor and improve teaching and learning.

* Relate subject matter to current issues-local, national, international.

Curriculum Strategies for Student Success:

A community college curriculum designed to assure student success will include the following characteristics:

* a well-developed, extensive remedial program;

* a core curriculum of general education courses;

* core curriculum requirements for graduation;

* writing, reading, speaking, and critical thinking emphases in every course;

* entry and exit competencies for individual courses; complementary entry and exit competencies for courses taken sequentially;

* strong international and multicultural components;

* an efficient, timely process for curriculum review and change.

Faculty Strategies for Student Success:

The best way to assure student success is to assure faculty success. Among the strategies whereby leading community colleges are assuring faculty success are the following:

* Hiring additional minority teachers to reflect the ethnic makeup of the student body and the community;

* Requiring demonstrated communications skills - reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking - in all disciplines as a condition of hiring;

* Hiring only those strongly committed to student success;

* Reviewing closely in that regard the teaching applicant's portfolio - a portfolio including syllabi, tests, statement of teaching philosophy, etc. - as well as the applicant's curriculum vitae;

* Maintaining as appropriate ratio between full-time and part-time faulty members;

* Structuring the college reward system to encourage and recognize outstanding teaching;

* Establishing a thorough, multi-faceted faculty evaluation system for formative purposes;

* Providing incentives and multiple and varied opportunities for faculty growth and development in the subject matter and in pedagogy, including such topics as use of technology, classroom research, dealing with a multicultural classroom, and dealing with a multicultural classroom, and dealing effectively with different learning styles;

* Stressing "scholarship" and "research" in a way that links both pursuits closely to teaching and learning;

* Encouraging cross-disciplinary and team teaching.

College-wide Strategies for Student Success:

* Create and maintain a climate that encourages and rewards innovation, creativity, and risk-taking on the part of all.

* Foster a spirit of communication, coordination, and cooperation among all units of the college, but especially between student development and instruction in areas such as assessment, placement, advisement, and extra-curricular emphases.

* Develop a student tracking system that provides significant data for assessment and improvement. The system should provide data on career students, transfer students, and continuing education students.

* Work from a governance model in which all - including students- participate in determining directions and making decisions.

* Make sure that basic administrative matters such as organizational structure, planning processes, and budgetary allocation of resources - personnel, facilities, equipment - reflect the college's commitment to student success.

* Develop a purpose statement or statement of philosophy that is real, that is measurable, and that places student success in the center of the circle or at the top of the list of priorities.

* Maintain a strong mentoring and tutoring program for students.

The responsibility for tailoring these guidelines to a specific college and effectively implementing them rests with the leadership of the institution. In the process, any college serious about student success will discover additional essential strategies not mentioned here.

Afterword: Beyond the Campus

Professional organizations like AACJC and its affiliate councils represented at the Student Success workshop can also play a vital role in the implementation of these strategies for student success:

* By highlighting successful activities in newsletters, Periodicals, monographs, and other publications.

* By sponsoring forums, workshops, summer institutes, and teleconferences dealing with student success issues.

* By creating additional recognition and reward programs which highlight successful teaching and successful learning.

The National Council of Instructional Administrators, through such activities as its annual Exemplary Instructional Programs

Awards and the 1990 Student Success Workshop, is already playing a prominent role. We pledge to redouble our efforts on behalf of student success: we invite the readers of this paper to join us.

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges
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